

THE DRAWING PATH

Hatching & Texture Marks

A Complete Lesson Plan

BEGINNER

HOBBYIST

PROFESSIONAL

Lesson 1 · Core Concepts

Teach Yourself to See

thedrawingpath.com

Contents

BEGINNER

- What Is Hatching?
- Parallel Hatching
- Value Through Spacing
- Exercises 1–4
- Common Mistakes
- Resources

HOBBYIST

- Cross-Hatching
- Contour Hatching
- Stippling
- Exercises 5–8
- Common Mistakes
- Resources

PROFESSIONAL

- Hatching as Form Language
- Direction as Descriptor
- Texture Systems
- Exercises 9–12
- Common Mistakes
- Resources

SKILL LEVEL 1

BEGINNER

Lines that become value.



Hatching & Texture Marks — Beginner

What Is Hatching?

Hatching is the practice of creating value — the range from light to dark — through repeated parallel strokes rather than shading with tone. It is the fundamental mark-making technique of pen-and-ink, engraving, and technical illustration, and it forms the basis of most traditional shading vocabulary.

Unlike smudged graphite or blended paint, hatching is made of discrete, identifiable marks. The viewer's eye averages them into perceived value. This makes hatching both precise and readable at a distance — a quality that has made it the standard in editorial illustration for centuries.

[VISUAL EXAMPLE]

Five value swatches from white to black, each created entirely with parallel hatching lines. Labels show approximate spacing: 4mm (light), 2mm, 1mm, 0.5mm (dark), solid (black).

Parallel Hatching

The simplest hatching: a series of evenly spaced, parallel lines all running in the same direction. The key variables are **spacing** (closer = darker), **weight** (thicker lines = darker value), and **angle** (usually 45° to horizontal for legibility, but varied by context). Beginners should master consistent spacing before varying line weight.

Value Through Spacing

The most controllable way to shift value is to vary spacing. Tight lines produce dark values; wide spacing produces light ones. Before adding more line layers (cross-hatching), explore the full value range achievable through spacing alone. Most students underestimate how dark a tight parallel hatch can read, and rush to cross-hatch before the first layer is doing its job.

Common Mistakes

Wobbly, inconsistent lines

Hatching from the wrist produces curved lines. Use the whole arm, anchored at the elbow, for straight consistent marks.

Uniform spacing everywhere

All hatching the same density across a surface. Value variation requires deliberately controlling spacing.

Lines at random angles

Hatching direction is meaningful. Avoid angles that look accidental — commit to a consistent angle for each pass.

Overworking dark areas immediately

Jumping to black before building mid-tones. Start light, add layers gradually.

Beginner Exercises

Value Scale Strip

20 min

TRAINS: Controlling value through spacing

STEPS

1. Draw a horizontal rectangle 7 inches wide, divided into 7 equal segments.
2. Label segments 1–7 from left to right (lightest to darkest).
3. Hatch each segment with consistent parallel lines at 45°, varying only the spacing.
4. Segment 1: lines 4mm apart. Segment 7: lines as tight as you can manage. Aim for even steps.

SELF-EVALUATE:

Can you distinguish all 7 values? Is each step a consistent increment darker than the previous?

Box Shading Exercise

25 min

TRAINS: Applying value to a simple 3D form

STEPS

1. Draw a 3-face box in isometric view (top, left side, right side visible).
2. Choose a light source from the upper left.
3. Hatch the top face with widely spaced lines (light value).
4. Hatch the left face with medium spacing. Hatch the right face with tight spacing (darkest).

SELF-EVALUATE:

Does the box read as three-dimensional? Does the lightest face feel closest to the light source?

Sphere Flat Hatch

20 min

TRAINS: Seeing the limits of parallel hatching

STEPS

1. Draw a circle 3 inches in diameter.
2. Shade it using only parallel hatching at a constant 45° angle.
3. Vary spacing to create a gradient from light (upper-left highlight zone) to dark (lower-right).
4. Note: the hatch lines will not follow the sphere's curve — that comes later with contour hatching.

SELF-EVALUATE:

Does the sphere read as a three-dimensional ball even with flat hatching? Where does it feel most convincing?

Texture Swatch Sheet

30 min

TRAINS: Exploring mark variety

STEPS

1. Divide an A4 page into 12 equal boxes.
2. In each box, create a different texture using hatching only — wood grain, stone, brick, fabric, grass, rust, cloud, fur, water, metal, paper, bark.
3. No box may use the same line direction or spacing strategy.
4. Label each box with the texture it represents.

SELF-EVALUATE:

Are the textures recognisable? Which strategies best captured organic versus manufactured surfaces?

Beginner Resources

Virtual Instructor — Hatching and Cross-Hatching

thevirtualinstructor.com

Clear video demonstrations of parallel hatching, value control, and the step-by-step process of building dark tones.

John Muir Laws — Ink Drawing Techniques

johnmuirlaws.com

Field naturalist and illustrator. Excellent tutorials on hatching for naturalistic texture — especially relevant for organic subjects.

Alphonso Dunn — Pen and Ink Drawing (YouTube)

youtube.com/c/AlphonsoDunn

Free YouTube channel entirely dedicated to pen-and-ink technique. The beginner hatching playlist is outstanding.

SKILL LEVEL 2

HOBBYIST

Cross-hatching, contour, and stipple.

2

Hatching & Texture Marks — Hobbyist

Cross-Hatching

Cross-hatching layers hatching in two or more directions to achieve darker values and a richer, more woven texture than a single layer can provide. The standard approach: first layer at 45°, second at 90° to the first (135°). A third layer at 90° to the second adds another value step. The key rule: each new layer should be at a distinct angle to the previous — not so similar that they read as one jumbled mass.

Cross-hatching is also an energy tool: tightly crossed lines in a focal area draw the eye and convey depth, while loosely hatched periphery recedes. Control this gradient intentionally rather than filling everything equally.

[VISUAL EXAMPLE]

Four panels: (1) single parallel hatch, (2) two-direction cross-hatch, (3) three-direction cross-hatch, (4) four-direction cross-hatch. Each panel shows the same 2x2 inch square progressing to a darker value.

Contour Hatching

Contour hatching follows the curvature of the form rather than running at a fixed angle. Lines wrap around the surface like geographic contours on a map. Applied to a sphere, they curve across the equator; applied to a cylinder, they run as parallel ellipses. Contour hatching communicates the three-dimensional form more explicitly than flat hatching — the direction of the lines is itself information about the surface.

Stippling

Stippling replaces lines with dots. Value is controlled by dot density — more dots per unit area equals darker value. Stippling produces a very fine, almost photographic texture when done with a technical pen, and a coarser, handmade texture with a brush. It is time-intensive but produces unique depth and a quality of light that hatching cannot fully replicate.

Common Mistakes

Cross-hatching at too similar angles

Two hatch layers at 40° and 50° look like one muddy layer. Keep angle differences at least 30°, ideally 45°.

Contour lines that don't match the form

Contour hatching that curves the wrong way, or doesn't wrap convincingly around the surface. Study the form's cross-sections first.

Stipple dots that are strokes

Dragging the pen slightly turns dots into dashes, ruining the stipple texture. Lift clean on each dot.

Hatching that ignores the form

Using flat hatching where contour hatching is called for — especially on rounded objects. The direction of marks communicates the surface.

Hobbyist Exercises

Cross-Hatch Value Scale

25 min

TRAINS: Layered value construction

STEPS

1. Draw a 5-step value scale (5 equal squares).
2. Square 1: single layer of parallel lines, widely spaced.
3. Square 2: add a second layer at 90° to the first.
4. Square 3: add a third layer at 45° to the second.
5. Square 4: add a fourth layer, tighten all existing layers.
6. Square 5: fill as solidly black as possible using repeated overlapping layers.

SELF-EVALUATE:

Are all 5 steps visually distinct? Does each square feel darker than the previous?

Contour-Hatched Sphere

35 min

TRAINS: Form description through line direction

STEPS

1. Draw a circle 4 inches in diameter with a light source from the upper left.
2. Starting at the equator, draw hatching lines that curve across the sphere's surface — like latitude lines.
3. Vary spacing: wide at the highlight, tight toward the terminator (light/shadow boundary).
4. Add a second layer of contour lines running in the perpendicular direction for darker shadow areas.

SELF-EVALUATE:

Does the sphere feel curved and solid? Do the hatch lines reinforce the roundness of the form?

Stipple Portrait

60 min

TRAINS: Patience, control, and tonal range through dots

STEPS

1. Find or draw a simple face photograph with strong light/shadow contrast.
2. Lightly sketch the basic proportions in pencil.
3. Using a fine-tipped pen, build the shadow areas with stipple dots — dense in shadows, sparse in midtones, none in highlights.
4. Do not use line hatching at all. The entire value range must come from dot density alone.

SELF-EVALUATE:

Does the face read as three-dimensional with volume? Are there clean, crisp highlights with no dots?

Texture Translation Study

40 min

TRAINS: Translating observed texture to hatching

STEPS

1. Find a photograph of a natural texture: rough bark, weathered wood, worn stone, crumpled paper.
2. Observe how light and shadow fall across the texture.
3. Reproduce the texture using only hatching — no shading allowed. The strokes themselves must describe the texture.
4. Compare your result to the photograph. Note which stroke directions most successfully described the surface.

SELF-EVALUATE:

Does your drawing communicate the texture type without context? Which mark types were most effective?

Hobbyist Resources

Alphonso Dunn — Cross-Hatching Mastery

youtube.com/c/AlphonsoDunn

Dedicated cross-hatch tutorials building from parallel to complex layered work. Free YouTube channel.

John Muir Laws — Contour Hatching for Naturalists

johnmuirlaws.com

Contour hatching applied to organic forms (animals, plants). Outstanding free tutorials.

Craftsy — Pen and Ink Fundamentals

[craftsy.com](https://www.craftsy.com)

Structured paid course covering all hatching types with instructor feedback. Good for hobbyists seeking accountability.

SKILL LEVEL 3

PROFESSIONAL

Hatching as a visual language system.

3

Hatching & Texture Marks — Professional

Hatching as Form Language

At the professional level, hatching is not just value rendering — it is a complete visual language. The direction, weight, rhythm, and spacing of marks communicates simultaneously: the form's three-dimensional curvature, the quality of the light, the surface material, and the emotional register of the image. A Renaissance engraving by Dürer uses all four of these channels in every square centimetre. Developing this fluency requires treating each stroke as a decision, not a reflex.

Direction as Form Descriptor

Marks running along a form's length emphasise elongation. Marks running across it emphasise breadth and curvature. Diagonal marks in a background push that area into the distance. Randomly mixed directions produce noise — no information. Professional hatchers plan their mark directions the way a composer plans voices: each direction has a purpose, and they interact harmoniously rather than competing.

Texture Systems

Consistent texture conventions across an illustration create coherence. Establish a vocabulary at the start of each project: what mark type represents skin, metal, fabric, hair, stone? Stick to it. Violating your own texture conventions mid-illustration creates visual confusion. This is the professional discipline that separates a finished illustration from a collection of studies.

Common Mistakes

Marks that fight each other

Multiple hatching systems competing in the same area, each pulling the eye in a different direction. Establish dominance hierarchies in your mark layers.

Ignoring edge quality

Hatching that bleeds past silhouette edges or terminates before reaching them. Edge quality communicates form as much as interior marks.

Forgetting the white

Over-hatching removes highlights and flattens the image. Preserve deliberate white areas — they are as important as the darkest marks.

Professional Exercises

Master Copy Study

90 min

TRAINS: Learning professional mark systems

STEPS

1. Select a Dürer, Rembrandt, or contemporary editorial illustrator (e.g. Sergio Toppi, Paul Hoppe) with strong hatching.
2. Choose a 4x4 inch section of the work.
3. Reproduce it as precisely as possible — match direction, spacing, weight, and edge quality.
4. After completing, analyse: how many distinct hatching systems did the original use? What did each communicate?

SELF-EVALUATE:

Can you identify every mark decision the original artist made? Did copying reveal techniques invisible to casual viewing?

Illustration with Mark Vocabulary

120 min

TRAINS: Designing a coherent texture system

STEPS

1. Choose a simple scene: a figure, a still life, or an architectural detail.
2. Before drawing: write down your texture vocabulary — one mark type per material present.
3. Execute the full illustration using only your pre-planned mark types.
4. After completion, review: were there moments you broke your vocabulary? Why?

SELF-EVALUATE:

Does the illustration feel visually coherent? Can a viewer identify the material of each element?

Atmospheric Perspective in Ink

75 min

TRAINS: Using hatching density to control depth

STEPS

1. Set up a simple landscape or interior scene with foreground, middle ground, and background.
2. Foreground: richest mark variety, strongest contrast, finest textures.
3. Middle ground: moderate mark density, softer edges.
4. Background: minimal marks, only outlines and the faintest hatching.
5. No continuous tone shading allowed — depth must come entirely from mark character.

SELF-EVALUATE:

Does the scene recede convincingly? Does the foreground demand attention while the background recedes?

Form Study: Curved Metal

80 min

TRAINS: Combining contour hatching with specular highlights

STEPS

1. Choose or invent a polished metal object: a helmet, a sphere, a kettle.
2. Map the reflection zones: highlight, diffuse light, core shadow, reflected light, cast shadow.
3. Use contour hatching following the form's curvature in all areas except the specular highlight (leave pure white).
4. Use cross-hatch in the core shadow to achieve near-black. Use stipple in the reflected light zone for subtlety.

SELF-EVALUATE:

Does the metal read as shiny and reflective? Are the specular highlights crisp and uncontaminated by marks?

Professional Resources

Dürer Prints — Studying the Master

metmuseum.org/art/collection

The Metropolitan Museum's collection of Dürer prints is free to view online. Study Knight, Death and the Devil for the full range of hatching systems.

Sergio Toppi — Illustration Study

illustrated-books.com

Toppi's work represents the apex of expressive hatching. His books are invaluable mark-making reference.

While primarily about colour, Gurney's discussions of value and form apply directly to hatching decisions.

Master Exercise Index

All exercises consolidated for quick reference.

Beginner

#	Exercise Name	What It Trains	Duration
B1	Value Scale Strip	Spacing-controlled value	20 min
B2	Box Shading Exercise	3-face form shading	25 min
B3	Sphere Flat Hatch	Parallel hatch on round form	20 min
B4	Texture Swatch Sheet	Mark variety exploration	30 min

Hobbyist

#	Exercise Name	What It Trains	Duration
H1	Cross-Hatch Value Scale	Layered value construction	25 min
H2	Contour-Hatched Sphere	Form description through lines	35 min
H3	Stipple Portrait	Tonal range through dots	60 min
H4	Texture Translation Study	Observed to rendered texture	40 min

Professional

#	Exercise Name	What It Trains	Duration
P1	Master Copy Study	Learning professional marks	90 min
P2	Illustration with Mark Vocab	Coherent texture system	120 min
P3	Atmospheric Perspective	Depth through mark density	75 min
P4	Form Study: Curved Metal	Specular plus contour hatch	80 min

Resource Directory

All recommended resources, consolidated.

Beginner

Resource	URL	Notes
Virtual Instructor	thevirtualinstructor.com	Hatching video demos
John Muir Laws	johnmuirlaws.com	Naturalistic hatching tutorials
Alphonso Dunn YouTube	youtube.com/c/AlphonsoDunn	Dedicated pen-and-ink channel

Hobbyist

Resource	URL	Notes
Alphonso Dunn — Cross-Hatching	youtube.com	Layered value instruction
John Muir Laws Contour	johnmuirlaws.com	Organic form hatching
Craftsy Pen and Ink	craftsy.com	Structured paid course

Professional

Resource	URL	Notes
Dürer Prints Online	metmuseum.org	Master hatching reference
Sergio Toppi Work	illustrated-books.com	Expressive mark-making apex
James Gurney	gurneyjourney.com	Value and form guidance